



Department  
for Education

# **Children accommodated in secure children's homes 31 March 2016**

**Quality and uses of data**

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## Description

This document outlines the use made of statistics covering children accommodated in secure children's homes and the types of decisions they inform. It provides information on the quality and reliability of these statistics overall, and in relation to the range of potential uses.

## Users and usage

### Department for Education and Central Government

The children accommodated in secure children's homes statistical first release (SFR) includes:

- The number of secure children's homes in England and Wales
- The number of places approved
- The number of children by age, gender, length of stay and type of placement

For more information on the items included in the SFR and how they have been calculated, please refer to the accompanying methodology note which is available on the publication webpage.

The purpose of this publication is to provide the latest information on the number of children accommodated in secure children's homes and the number of places approved for use. In 2004 the number of welfare placements in secure children's homes began to decline leading to the closure of several homes and concerns among the sector about the future of the remaining homes. The information in this SFR is used by officials in the Department for Education (DfE) to monitor trends and places in secure homes in case intervention by the DfE is required. The department is particularly interested in information on welfare places.

By having information available on secure homes, the department can be assured that there is sufficient flexibility in the market to allow local authorities to place young people in secure children's homes when they feel this is the most appropriate action for that young person.

### Other users

We are very familiar with the uses made of the data within the Department for Education and by the UK Government. However we have less clarity of the uses made of this data by other organisations and external parties.

A user consultation was carried out in 2011 but no responses were received. We will continue to engage with users to ensure that the publication best meets their needs and welcome feedback or suggestions from any new or previously unknown users which we will take on board. Would you like to feed in your views? If so, please see contact details in the publication.

## Data quality

The 2016 figures for children accommodated in secure children's homes are the latest in a regular series. Data is collected on the SA1 statistical return, which provides the Department for Education with aggregate data on children accommodated in secure children's homes in England and Wales.

The figures presented at 31 March 2016 are based on data reported by the 15 secure children's homes that were open at this time. The 2016 data has gone through the validation checks described in the accompanying methodology note which is available on the publication webpage and there are no known quality issues with this data. The data collection which is the source for this publication is unchanged and has been stable for many years.

## Related information

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Ofsted

Ofsted publishes official statistics annually in July on [children's social care providers and places](#) (previously in November and May) and management information, on the same subject, in December. This includes data on the maximum number of places a provider may offer at any one time. Secure children's homes are one of a number of types of provider that they cover.

We check the number of approved places in our collection against the maximum number of places for each of the secure children's homes in England at 31 March reported by Ofsted which are published in July.

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Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) publishes [youth custody data](#) monthly on children and young people within secure children's homes (SCHs), secure training centres (STCs) and young offender institutions (YOIs).

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While this publication from the Department for Education is concerned with children accommodated in secure children's homes, the YJB publishes statistics on the population in custody of children and young people within secure children's homes, young offender institutions and secure training centres. The YJB data do not include children placed in a secure children's home on a welfare basis.

From the YJB publication, only the figures on children in secure children's homes are comparable with figures in this publication. We can compare the under 18 secure population accommodated in SCHs as at March 2016 from table 2.4 Accom Type of the YJB publication with those children accommodated in a criminal context in this Department for Education publication. The former shows 101 children accommodated (provisional data) and the latter 105. There are some small differences in definitions and methodology which can explain the difference between the two publications:

- i) The YJB figures are for those accommodated in SCHs under 18 years old, whereas this Department for Education publication includes those accommodated in SCHs that are 18 years old and over.
- ii) The YJB figures are a monthly snapshot of the custodial population in the secure estate for children and young people. They are taken on the last Friday of the month or first Friday of the following month, depending on which is nearer to the actual month end and not necessarily the position at 31 March on which this publication is based.
- iii) Both sets of figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing and can be subject to change over time. The YJB figures have been drawn from the internal YJB placements system (eAsset, which replaced SACHS in April 2012) which is populated by the YJB upon

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placement of children into custody. The Department for Education's figures are taken from local records held by secure children's homes.

Both the Department for Education and YJB figures are useful in their own right. The Department for Education's figures provides a comparable annual time series of data on secure children's homes sourced directly from them, and includes some figures on children detained or sentenced and placed by the YJB in a secure children's home. The YJB figures show the custody population in secure children's homes.

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| Research report | A research report, titled ' <a href="#">Understanding the Market for Secure Children's Homes</a> ' was undertaken by the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre in September and October 2011, as part of the centre's programme of rapid-response work for the Department for Education on issues of immediate policy relevance. |
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| Rest of the UK | Figures on the number of children accommodated in secure children's homes in Scotland are published in the <a href="#">Children's and Social Work Statistics Scotland</a> publication.<br><br>Northern Ireland does not produce statistics relating specifically to secure accommodation. |
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| Children's homes data pack | The Department for Education produced a <a href="#">data pack on children's homes</a> . |
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| Previous publications | <a href="#">Links to previous publications</a> . |
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